

Pets and animals

Having a pet can be very rewarding and provides a lot of people with a much-needed companion. This is especially true in later life, when you may not have the family or social networks that you once did.

There are many benefits to keeping a pet, but you should remember that looking after an animal can also be very demanding and is not something that should be taken on without a lot of thought and consideration.

Things to consider before getting a pet

We have listed here some of the points to think about before making this important decision. You may also find it useful to talk to a family member, friend or neighbour who already has a pet, for their advice.

Different types of pets require different levels of care so it might be an idea to get a pet that suits your lifestyle. For example, a dog needs regular exercise, birds and small animals have to be cleaned out regularly, whereas cats need little more than regular meals and affection.

- **Companionship** – Having a pet means that you will always have company. Although it may not be the same as having another person in the house, it can be a very good substitute.
- **Exercise** – If you have a dog, this will help to keep you active as they need exercising every day. It may also help you to meet new people, as you will usually see other dog owners walking their pets. If you already have a dog and you are finding it difficult to look after, there are organisations that may be able to help.
- **Health benefits** – Research has shown that having a pet can be beneficial to your health. Pet owners have been found to suffer less from headaches, colds and hay fever, and having a pet can also help to reduce high blood pressure and cholesterol. Pet owners also say that they suffer less from stress and depression, and it is thought that having a pet can help people to cope better with bereavement.
- **Cost** – You should always take into consideration that pets can be expensive to care for. Pet food can be fairly cheap, but there are other costs involved such as healthcare. Over the course of a lifetime it can cost £16,000 – £31,000 to care for a dog, around £17,000 for a cat and about £9,000 for a rabbit.
- As well as the benefits for yourself, remember that by having a pet you are giving a home to

an animal that could otherwise be living in an animal shelter or be stray.

The [RSPCA](#) website provides some useful information about each type of pet to help you decide which type of animal would suit you best.

Microchipping your pet

From April 2016, all dogs need to be micro chipped by law. A microchip is a small electronic chip that is implanted under your dog's skin. Each microchip has a unique 15 digit number which is revealed when scanned by a microchip reader. There is a fine for non-compliance.

It is illegal for any breeder to sell a puppy that is not microchipped and registered on a compliant database that meets the legal requirement. The breeder must provide transfer of keepership documents to the puppy buyer to ensure the new owner can update their details in order to comply with the law.

Where to get a pet

If you have decided to get a pet, there are several ways of going about it. You could visit your local animal shelter, look at the advertisements in your local paper, or go to a pet shop.

Animal shelters are places where unwanted animals are taken to be cared for until they are found new homes. There are three dog and cat shelters in Newcastle:

- [Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter](#) – Benton North Farm
- [Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter](#) – Claremont Road, and
- [Westgate Ark](#) – cats only

For more information about buying a cat or a dog visit www.gov.uk/buying-a-cat-or-dog

Help with looking after a pet

Practical help

As you get older you may find that it becomes more difficult to look after your pet. There are some organisations that can help by walking your dog or buying pet food if you are housebound. They can also take your animal to the vet if you are unable to do this yourself.

[Cinnamon Trust](#) works with elderly and terminally ill people and their pets to try to keep them together for as long as possible. Volunteers can assist with the practical day to day care of pets, for example by walking dogs, helping with transport, feeding, grooming, medication etc. The trust also provides short term foster care for pets who's owners face a spell in hospital. The trust also produces a guide to Pet Friendly Care Homes.

[Dogs Trust](#) is a charity that looks after stray and abandoned dogs in the UK. They have recently launched the 'Canine Care Card' , which is a free service to give you peace of mind that the Dogs Trust will look after your dog in the event of your death. They will find your dog a new home, or if

this is not possible, they will look after it for the rest of it's life.

Financial help

[PDSA PetAid Hospital](#) provides free veterinary care for owners who can't afford private vet fees. This includes treatment for all popular domestic pets, such as dogs, cats, rabbits and hamsters.

To qualify for help from the PDSA, you must live within the catchment area of a PDSA PetAid hospital or practice, and you must be in receipt of either Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.

Dog Friendly pubs, cafes and groups

The good news is that there are a number of pubs and cafes that you can take your dog into. There are several comprehensive lists that you can check:

[Newcastle Gateshead Initiative](#) have a tab on the [Best Dog Friendly pubs](#) including: The Brandling Villas, The Cluny and The Bridge Tavern. The list includes pubs in Gateshead and you could try the Staiths cafe.

[The Chronicle Live](#) also has a list including restaurants and cafes such as Lola Jeans and The Town Wall as well as those further afield in South Tyneside, North Tyneside and Northumberland.

Cafes include:

The Cafe in the Park at Exhibition Park near the Lake and Les Petits Choux, near the tennis courts in Leazes Park.

If you are planning a beach walk then consider the following pubs that are close by:

- The Sun Inn at Alnmouth
- The Priory at Tynemouth
- The Promenade in Sunderland
- The Bamburgh Castle Inn at Seahouses
- The Boatyard at Cullercoats

If you want to socialise with people who love their pets as much as you do then you could take a look at the [Doggiepubs](#) website and get involved in giving ratings and feedback.

[Cani-fit](#) offers trail running and power walking with your dog.

Taking your pet on holiday

If you are going on holiday in the UK and you want to take your pet with you, visit the [Doggie Pubs](#) website for details of suitable pubs and accommodation.

If you want to take your pet abroad, the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) is a system that allows dogs, cats and ferrets into EU countries without the need for quarantine. Contact the [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs \(DEFRA\)](#) for more information.

Lost Pets

If your pet has gone missing you can check with the local Dog Warden at [Newcastle City Council](#) to see if your dog has been found. If so, it will be held at the Dog and Cat Shelter for 7 days.

Reporting a stray or injured animal

If you come across an injured animal, or you are concerned about an animal that appears to be stray, you can take them to your local shelter where they will either be re-homed or reunited with their owner. You can also report stray pets to [Newcastle City Council](#).

Dog Theft

Sadly, dog theft now accounts for thousands of greatly loved pets going missing every year. Mainly, it's pedigree and crossbreeds which are stolen – for breeding, hunting, selling-on, held for ransom or, most distressingly, for dog fighting. But all dogs can be vulnerable.

Measures to take to keep your dog safe

- Make sure your dog is micro chipped – and/or ear tattooed. Keep your microchip details updated.
- Ensure your dog has a collar and tag, with your name/ address details clearly inscribed.
- Try not to let your dog go out of sight when walking.
- Keep your dog in view in the garden and never leave it alone there when you go out. Make sure garden fences are high enough and gates secure.
- Never leave your dog tethered outside shops, libraries, toilets etc.
- Don't leave your dog unattended in a parked car.
- Think carefully about letting unaccompanied youngsters walk your dog.
- Keep clear, recent photographs of your dog. Record any unusual or distinguishing features.

If your dog is stolen, report it to the police and ask for a crime number. This will be necessary to effect possible insurance claims.

[Dog Lost](#) has details of lost and found dogs and may be able to help reunite you with your missing pet.

Pets in sheltered accommodation and care homes

Moving into sheltered accommodation or a care home is a huge decision and there are many things to consider before you leave your home. If you have a pet, you may decide that you can no longer cope with looking after it. If this is the case you may have a friend or relative who is

willing to adopt it. If not, you can take your pet to an animal shelter where it will be re-homed.

If you wish to take your pet with you to your new home, you must ensure that they accept pets. [FirstStop – Advice for older people](#) has details of sheltered accommodation schemes and care homes that are 'pet-friendly'.

The death of a pet

Losing a pet is a distressing time for any family and you may want to organise a funeral. Whether you are looking for a memorial for your cat, dog, horse or something smaller, you can arrange a home or organised funeral. There are a wide variety of urns, coffins – some of which are biodegradable, as well as memorials, plaques and stones.

There may be one or two Pet funeral organisations and you may like to visit [Urns for Ashes](#) for a range of ideas.

Alternatives to having a pet

Once you have considered the options, you may have decided that keeping a pet would not be suitable for you. There may be other ways that you can have contact with animals, or can help to care for them.

Sponsorship

It is possible to help an animal through sponsorship. You could sponsor a kennel at your local animal shelter or 'adopt' an animal such as a donkey, horse or even an elephant through a charity. You will usually receive photographs and updates about your adopted animal and it is a great way to help without having the responsibility of the practical care.

Volunteering

If you have some time to spare, you could [volunteer](#) to help out at your local animal shelter or an animal charity. This might involve dog walking, cleaning kennels or grooming

Other Useful Organisations

- [Blue Cross – Animal Charity](#)
- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(RSPCA\)](#)
- [Walkerville Community Centre](#) have a Dog Group.
- [Pets as Therapy](#) provides dogs and cats with registered volunteers to hospitals, hospices, residential care homes, day centres, special needs schools and many other establishments, providing comfort, companionship and therapy.
- [Street Paws](#) provides free accessible vet care and kennel provision to homeless people and those in crisis across the UK.

Useful Organisations

Cinnamon Trust

Email: sherry@cinnamon.org.uk

Website: www.cinnamon.org.uk

Telephone: 01736 757 900

Address: 10 Market Square, TR27 4HE

Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter – Benton North Farm

Website: www.dogandcatshelter.com

Telephone: 0191 232 2878

Address: Benton North Farm, NE12 8EH

Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter – Claremont Road

Email: info@dogandcatshelter.com

Website: www.dogandcatshelter.com

Telephone: 0191 232 2878

Address: Claremont Road, NE2 4NL

PDSA PetAid Hospital

Website: <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0191 214 6800

Address: The Ann Coleman Centre, NE5 3AJ

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs

Telephone: 0370 241 1710

Address: Customer Contact Unit, SW1P 4DF

Pets As Therapy

Email: reception@petsastherapy.org

Website: www.petsastherapy.org

Telephone: 01865 671 440

Address: 59 Monument Business Park , OX44 7RW

Dogs Trust

Website: www.dogstrust.org.uk

Telephone: 01325 333114

Address: 17 Wakley Street, EC1V 7RQ

Housing Options for Older People (HOOP)

Email: hoop@eac.org.uk

Website: <https://hoop.eac.org.uk/hoop/start.aspx>

Telephone: 0800 377 7070

Address: Suite A, SE1 7JW

Dog Lost

Email: admin@doglost.co.uk

Website: www.doglost.co.uk

Telephone: 0844 800 3220

Address: 30 Park Avenue , NP20 3AP

Blue Cross – Animal Charity

Email: info@bluecross.org.uk

Website: www.bluecross.org.uk

Telephone: 0844 800 3220

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Website: www.rspca.org.uk

Telephone: 0844 800 3220

Walkerville Community Centre

Email: walkervillecommunitycentre@hotmail.co.uk

Website: <https://walkervillecommunity.wixsite.com/mysite>

Telephone: 0191 262 3147

Address: 6 Pinewood Close, NE6 4SZ

Westgate Ark

Email: admin@westgateark.org.uk

Website: <http://www.westgateark.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0191 2739555

Address: Westgate Ark Cat Homing Centre, NE4 6PH

Barking Mad – Newcastle and Tyne Valley Branch

Email: carrie.jarvis@barkingmad.uk.com

Website: <https://www.barkingmad.uk.com/franchisees/newcastle-tyne-valley/>

Telephone: 0191 414 7264

Address: Stella Park, NE21 4LF

NewcastleGateshead

Email: ngi@ngi.org.uk

Website: www.newcastlegateshead.com

Telephone: 0191 440 5720

Address: 9th Floor Baltic Place, NE8 3AE

Cani-fit

Email: Info@cani-fit.com

Website: <https://cani-fit.com/>

Telephone: 0770 939 4667

Address: 5 Kilmarnock Road, KA3 2RA

Street Paws

Email: streetpaws.northeast@yahoo.com

Website: <https://streetpaws.co.uk/>

Telephone: 07972 918 189

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